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Joe Sterrett, my uncle, Command Master Chief of SEAL Team Four, or as I know him, my hero. He is the most humble person you will ever meet. He is a loving father, a caring husband, but also an E9 Master Chief Petty Officer. He has served in the Navy for 25 years now and was a Corpsman for his first 14. He has been on 9 deployments overseas including Bolivia, Colombia, Panama, the Caribbean, Thailand, Iraq, and Afghanistan three times. As I was interviewing him, I asked, "Why do you serve?" He told me that, "Originally it looked exciting," as he continued on, he said, "there's a lot of crappy things we do, but there's a lot of pretty awesome things we get to do and accomplish. I truly serve because I mean, not to sound like a cheese ball, but because I want to help make things a safer place and I don't want my kids to inherit a mess of a world." His answer honestly made me tear up. Not tears of sadness, not tears of joy, but tears of pride. I was proud to know him and call him my uncle. He risks his life on a constant basis not only to keep his kids safe, but people he has never met before.

As I continued on in the interview, I started to ask some deeper questions. I made sure he knew that if he didn't want to answer them that it was understandable. I asked if he had any friends killed in combat. He told me that he was friends with most of the SEAL team 10 that were part of Operation Red Wings. You may know now as the movie, The Lone Survivor. He was also good friends with two of the SEALs on the Chinook CH-47 helicopter that had been shot down with an RPG (rocket propelled grenade) by the Taliban. This is the single deadliest day in the Afghanistan war. 17 Navy SEALs were killed in this attack. Lastly, he and my father, who is also a veteran,

had a friend who they both had served with, who had retired. He suffered from severe PTSD and unfortunately took his own life due to the terrible disorder. There were many more he mentioned, but these were the three biggest losses he had faced. He said, "Guys on the battlefield and off the battlefield we've lost." As tragic as this is, it reminds us that people are willing to sacrifice their life for our country. They are willing to give their life to keep us safe.

As I ended my interview, he said something that will stick with me for the rest of my life. He said "It's never about one individual. While we may say there are heroes among us, there's always a ton of people behind those individuals that make them shine, or be in the limelight. Everything is a team effort." This is something I never really put much thought into. When I was given this year's topic of essay, "heroes among us", I automatically thought of Uncle Joe. However, he really opened my eyes and made me realize that while there may be heroes, they couldn't have done it without their teammates and everything in life is really a team effort.